

Week Ending Friday, November 3, 1995

**Remarks in a Telephone
Conversation With Democratic
Congressional Leaders**
October 27, 1995

Senator Thomas A. Daschle. Hello, Mr. President.

Congressman Richard A. Gephardt. Hello, Mr. President.

The President. How are you?

Senator Daschle. Not good.

The President. Tell me what's going on.

Senator Daschle. Well, we're still working on our reconciliation bill. Democrats are offering a series of amendments that deal directly with each of the concerns that we have. But I must say it doesn't appear that there is any prospect of improving this bill. This bill is just as mean and as extreme as it was when it was introduced. It ends Medicare, it rewards the rich, and ravages the rest. And so I must tell you, I am very disappointed to report that every Democrat here in the Senate tonight at some point will be voting against this piece of legislation.

The President. Tell them not to worry about it; I'm going to veto it anyway.

Senator Daschle. Well, I applaud you for that because I must tell you it is a terrible piece of legislation. It's the wrong plan for the wrong reason, done the wrong way to help the wrong people. And I—

The President. Otherwise you don't feel strongly about it. *[Laughter]* You know, this is one of those moments in our history when I'm grateful for the wisdom of the Founding Fathers. I mean, the Congress gets to propose, but the President has to sign or veto. And the Constitution gave me that authority, and one of the reasons for the veto is to prevent excess. And this is—we are willing to work with them in good faith to balance this budget. We believe in that. You saw what—and America saw earlier this week—what the Democrats did to bring the deficit from 290 billion down to 255, then to 205, then to 164,

when we were all working together. And that approach has been rejected. So I will have no alternative but to veto it. It's excessive, and it's wrong for all the reasons you said.

I just want to urge you to keep offering your amendments, standing up, make it clear what you believe in, and tell everybody to just stay positive and just stand up there, stand for what we believe in.

Senator Daschle. Mr. President, I've consulted with virtually every member of our caucus, and they have all indicated that if you veto it, we will have the votes and then some to sustain that veto.

The President. Dick?

Congressman Gephardt. Mr. President, we have the very same situation in the House. We had a very united Democratic Party. As you know, yesterday, we had 203 votes against their plan. We even picked up 10 Republicans who voted against the plan.

The President. Brave souls.

Congressman Gephardt. So the phalanx is beginning to splinter a little bit. But they will stand behind you and sustain this veto. And I must tell you that I really believe the American people will be behind you as well.

I was at Cambridge Hospital this morning with Joe Kennedy, and Hillary had been there I think about a year ago. This is a hospital, as you know, that has about 60 percent Medicare and Medicaid. It's a public hospital. And they really believe that if cuts of this magnitude go through, they'll have to close the hospital. And I met with the doctors and nurses and the staff there and told them that I believed you would veto this legislation if it got through and that we would stand behind that veto. And they applauded and applauded and applauded because it means whether or not there's going to be health care in that community and communities all over the country.

So we're behind you, and we're going to stay there. And we appreciate what you're doing.

Senator Daschle. Mr. President, I would say not only are we willing to support you in your position on vetoing this legislation, but I think it's also fair to say that every Democrat is prepared to go to work the day after you veto that bill to work in a constructive way to find alternatives and to work with Republicans to find some positive conclusion to this whole affair. It's important we learn to govern, that we work with Republicans in doing that. But obviously, they have concluded, as we have, that this veto is the only way that we're going to get it done. And so we look forward to working with you.

The President. Well, we want to work with them, but we've got to stick with our principles, you know. They talk about their principles of balancing the budget and securing Medicare and having some kind of tax cut. And, you know, I accept that. I think we ought to balance the budget, secure Medicare, and I'm not opposed to a tax cut if it's properly targeted and emphasizes childrearing and education for middle class people.

But I believe that the more important principles are the ones that have been rejected by them that we had to stand up for. I mean, here we are on the verge of the 21st century; no major American company would cut education and training and cut technology and cut research, but they do. We can't tolerate that.

Nobody would—with any sense of fairness—would raise taxes on working families with children with incomes of \$27,000 a year or less. That will discourage people moving from welfare to work. But that's what they do. Nobody who understands what the world is going to be like 10 years from now would have the kind of cuts and crippling provisions related to the environment that they do.

And of course we've been treated to a real education on Medicare and Medicaid which is the most grievous thing of all. I mean, we have obligations to our parents, to the poor children of this country, to the disabled people, and also to the hospitals and to the doctors and the others that are participating in these programs. It's just not right.

And so we have our principles to stand for, and we'll stand for them. And I'm glad you're going to stand with me. And eventually

America will be better for this. If we stand up for America and for the future and for the things we believe in, it's going to be all right.

But as I said in this phone conversation, I'm probably more grateful today for the wisdom of the Founding Fathers than I have ever been in my life. They knew what they were doing, and we're going to use the Constitution they gave us to stand up for what's right.

Senator Daschle. Well, thank you, Mr. President. We appreciate your leadership and look forward to working with you.

The President. Thank you. Thank you, Dick.

Congressman Gephardt. Thank you, Mr. President. There's a lot of people that are glad you're there and glad you've got the veto pen today, believe me.

The President. Well, just be of good cheer. Just go out there and debate these things and tell them what we believe in, and it will all work out. We'll make it work out for America.

Congressman Gephardt. Great.

Senator Daschle. Thank you.

The President. Thanks.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:23 p.m. from the Oval Office in the White House. This item was not received in time for publication in the appropriate issue.

The President's Radio Address

October 28, 1995

Good morning. I want to talk to you today about what's at stake for the American people in the great budget debate now taking place in Washington. But first, I've got some good news to report.

Our country is on the move. Our economy is the strongest in the world, and it's growing. Yesterday, the official report on the economy for the last 3 months showed continued strong economic growth with very low inflation. And this week we also learned that we've cut the budget deficit nearly in half since I became President. It has dropped for 3 years in a row for the first time since President Truman was in office. The American